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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001998

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT RAJAPAKSE APPOINTS SLIMMER CABINET

REF: A. COLOMBO 1982

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 1994

Classified By: Classified By: DCM James F. Entwistle. Reason: 1.4 (B,D)  
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[1](#)1. (C) Summary. President Mahinda Rajapakse appointed his cabinet on November 23, delayed reportedly because of several days of debate about who should control which portfolios. With 25 ministers, the new cabinet is slimmer than in the previous administration, with one notable deletion being separate Ministries of Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian Affairs. Biodata on key cabinet ministers follow. The President is expected to retain the Defense and Finance portfolios. Biographic information about Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, Prime Minister and Minister of Disaster Management, is REF A. Biographic information about new Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera is REF B. End Summary.

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New Cabinet Formed  
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[1](#)2. (C) On November 23, newly-elected President Mahinda Rajapakse named a new cabinet of 25 ministers. The swearing-in reportedly was delayed two-and-a-half days because of in-fighting about assignment of portfolios. Sources also said the Janatha Vemukthi Peramuna (JVP) refused to take any cabinet position because the party expects that parliamentary elections will be held within the next three or four months. Rajapakse's cabinet contains 10 fewer posts than the 35 of his predecessor. The President is expected to retain Defense and Finance for himself. Among the portfolios cut from the cabinet were the Ministries of Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian Affairs.

[1](#)3. (U) The following are the ministers in Rajapakse's cabinet:

-Ratnasiri Wickremanayake	-	Prime Minister; Minister of Disaster Management
-Anura Bandaranaike	-	Minister of Tourism
-D. M. Jayaratne	-	Minister of Post and Telecommunications; Minister of Rural Economic Development
-Amarasiri Dodangoda	-	Minister of Justice and Law Reforms
-Nimal Siripala de Silva	-	Minister of Health, Nutrition and Welfare
-Mangala Samaraweera	-	Minister of Foreign Affairs; Minister of Ports and Aviation
-A.H.M. Fowzie	-	Minister of Transport; Minister of Trains; Minister of Petroleum Development
-Jeyaraj Fernandopulle	-	Minister of Trade, Commerce, and Consumer Affairs; Minister of Highways
-Maithripala Sirisena	-	Minister of Agriculture; Minister of Irrigation; Minister of Mahaweli Development
-John Senaviratne	-	Minister of Power and Energy
-Sumedha Jayasena	-	Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection
-Sarath Amunugama	-	Minister of Public Administration and Home Affairs
-Anura Priyadharshana Yapa	-	Minister of Information and Media
-Dinesh Gunawardena	-	Minister of Urban Development and Water Management
-Douglas Devananda	-	Minister of Social Services and Social Welfare
-Susil Premajayantha	-	Minister of Education
-Athauda Senaviratne	-	Minister of Labor and Foreign Employment

-S. B. Navinna - Minister of Rural Industries Development; Minister of Self-Employment

-Piyasena Gamage - Minister of Vocation Training

-Janaka B. Tennekoon - Minister of Local Government and Provincial Councils

-A. L. M. Athaulla - Minister of Fisheries; Minister of Housing Development

-Rohita Bogollagama - Minister of Industry and Investment Promotions

-Tissa Vitharana - Minister of Science and Technology

-D. E. W. Gunasekara - Minister of Constitutional Affairs and National Integration

-Ferial Ashraff - Minister of Housing and Construction

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 Biodata on Key Cabinet Ministers  
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14. (C) The following is biodata on key ministers. Biographic information for Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, Prime Minister and Minister of Disaster Management, is REF A. Biographic information for Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera is REF B.

- JEYARAJ FERNANDOPULLE, born January 11, 1953, maintains his position as Minister of Trade, Commerce, and Consumer Affairs and added Highways. He first entered Parliament in 1989. He was the Deputy Minister of Planning and of Ethnic Affairs and National Integration in former President Chandrika Kumaratunga's first administration in 1994. He served as the Minister of Tourism; Civil Aviation; and Christian Affairs from 2000-2001. He is a Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) moderate. An attorney-at-law, Fernandopulle is a member of the Colombo Chetty ethnic group of Tamil-speaking Catholics. He is from Negombo District north of Colombo and is married.

- A(BDUL) H(AMID) M(OHAMMED) FOWZIE, born October 13, 1937, is Minister of Transport; Trains; and Petroleum Development. He was Minister of Environment and Natural Resources in the previous administration. He entered politics as a member of the United National Party (UNP) but became the first SLFP mayor of Colombo when he switched his party allegiance after taking the office in the early 1970s. Following the UNP parliamentary victory in 1977, Fowzie was stripped of his civil rights and kept out of politics until 1991, when he returned to the Colombo Municipal Council as leader of the opposition. He was elected to the Western Provincial Council in 1993, serving as Minister of Transport, Housing, and Construction. He was the Minister of Health, Highways, and Social Services in Kumaratunga's first administration in 1994. Fowzie is a moderate in SLFP ranks and sometimes conflicts with hard-liners like Mangala Samaraweera. He is well-traveled, articulate, and friendly to the United States. As a businessman he was involved in the transportation and gemming industries. He writes poetry and once dabbled in film production. A Muslim, he is married, with four grown children.

- SUSIL PREMAJAYANTHA, born January 10, 1955, is the new Minister of Education. He was Minister of Power and Energy in the previous administration. He also was the General Secretary of the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) (the

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was the technical name of the SLFP-JVP combine). Premajayantha first entered Parliament in 2000 and briefly served as Minister of Education that same year. An attorney-at-law, Premajayantha obtained his law degree from the University of Colombo. Premajayantha previously held several government positions, including serving as the Chief Minister of the Western Province from 1995-1998. A former mayor of Kotte, a town outside of Colombo, he is approachable and friendly to the United States. He is Sinhalese Buddhist and is married.

- JOHN SENAVIRATNE, born January 15, 1941, is the new Minister of Power and Energy. An attorney-at-law, he was Minister of Justice and Judicial Reforms in the previous administration. Senaviratne first entered Parliament in 1989. He was appointed the Deputy Minister of Education in Kumaratunga's first administration in 1994 and was also Minister of Health from 2000-2001. He is a Sinhalese Buddhist and is married.

- ANURA PRIYADHARSHANA YAPA, born January 18, 1959, is the new Minister of Information and Media. He was Minister of Plantation Industries in the previous administration. He first entered Parliament in 1994. Yapa served as a North-West Province Provincial Council member in the early

1990s. He was the Deputy Minister of Information and Media from 2000-2001. A participant in an International Visitors Program in 1996, he is from Kurunegala District, northeast of Colombo. He is considered a dynamic, up-and-coming politician. An attorney-at-law, Yapa is Sinhalese Buddhist and is married.

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